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THE OBSERVER

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THURSDAY

August 27, 2020

\$1.50

Good day to our valued subscriber Bruce Parks of Union

Wildfires

Smoke makes air quality unhealthy

Portions of Monday and Tuesday saw quality index move above 100

By Ronald Bond

The Observer

LA GRANDE — Smoke from area and regional wildfires may not yet be blocking the view of Mount Emily from downtown La Grande as it did in 2018. But the blazes have at times resulted in the air quality in the valley reaching unhealthy levels.

The Air Quality Index on the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality website spent at least a portion of Monday and Tuesday, Aug. 24-25, above 100, placing it in a range the DEQ says is unhealthy for sensitive groups.

The AQI on Monday evening peaked at 112 at the La Grande monitoring station, part of a nine-hour period where it was in triple digits before dropping back into the “moderate” range — between 51 and 100 — early Tuesday morning. A second uptick early Tuesday early afternoon saw it reach as high as 103 before decreasing.

Wednesday, the level had dropped into the 50s and low 60s.

The numbers are similar across the Grande Ronde Valley. The station in Cove reached an AQI level of 108 Monday and peaked at 109 during the overnight hours early Tuesday morning before settling again. Wednesday, the number in Cove was higher than La Grande but had dropped to 65 by 11 a.m.

Numbers in Enterprise also peaked around the same time, spending a 20-hour period from Monday at 5 p.m. to Tuesday at 1 p.m. above 100 and reaching a top level of 115. It was still above 70 Wednesday morning but by midday fell into the low 50s.

Baker City did not crack the 100 threshold Monday, but the area was above the mark much of the day Tuesday and reached as high as 108. By 11 a.m. Wednesday it was down to 55.

Many of the monitoring stations in Eastern Oregon saw similar readings early Wednesday, but most of the western part of the state was in the “good” range below 50.

A handful of fires are burning in Eastern Oregon, including the Meacham Complex, the Street Mountain Fire, the Laurel Fire, the Frog Fire and, the largest one, the Indian Creek Fire. The

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Staff photo by Ronald Bond

Oregon National Guard Sgt. Christopher Callaham presents a U.S. flag to La Grande resident Lee Graham, a World War II veteran in attendance at a ceremony Tuesday, Aug. 25, that commemorated the lives of 15 servicemen who died in a B-24 Liberator crash outside of Elgin 75 years ago.

Honoring the forgotten

Ceremony honors servicemen who died in plane crash at end of World War II

By Dick Mason

The Observer

ELGIN — For a moment early Tuesday afternoon, Lee Graham, a La Grande World War II veteran, felt as if the weight of 15 young servicemen was on his shoulders.

The 15 men who died before their communities could recognize them for who they were — World War II heroes.

Graham was attending a ceremony saluting the servicemen aboard an American B-24 Liberator coming home to the Northwest. The big plane crashed in the Blue Mountains of Union County, 17 miles northwest of Elgin on Aug. 25, 1945. The 15 aboard had served in the European Theater, and each died in the accident.

Tuesday’s ceremony, at the site of the rash, included the formal presentation of an American flag by members of the Third Battalion, 116th Cavalry of the Oregon National Guard, to Graham, who represented the 15 servicemen. Graham acknowledged he felt a responsibility to represent the servicemen with honor after receiving the flag, which in turn he will give to the Union County Museum.

The responsibility he feels in representing these 15 servicemen and WWII veterans overall is becoming greater, he



Staff photo by Ronald Bond

La Grande resident Lyle Schwarz, right, reads the names of the 15 servicemen who died in an Aug. 25, 1945, B-24 Liberator crash in the mountains about 17 miles outside of Elgin. The aircraft was returning home following World War II. Schwarz and fellow La Grande resident Armen Woosley coordinated the Tuesday, Aug. 25 service on the 75th anniversary of the crash.

said, because the number who can speak for them is diminishing.

“I feel like this is the end of the line. We are losing so many World War II veterans,” he said.

The 15 fallen veterans, all members of the Army Air Corps were Capt. Edwin F. Zdunczyk, the pilot; 1st Lt. Carleton H. Keeler, co-pilot; 2nd Lts. R.B. Wright, navigator, and G.C. Oes-

reicher, bombardier; 1st Lt. J. Kagel; Technical Sgt. F.G. Emmelmann, radio operator; Sgts. Emil Eckert, Paul E. Kleiner, and M.M. Pickell, all engineers; and gunners, Staff Sgt. R.B. Walters and Sgts. A.H. Brundahl, B.G. Fletcher, A.P. Lupisella, T.R. Frasier and R.W. Johnson.

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La Grande Farmers Market celebrates 40 years

By Sabrina Thompson

The Observer

LA GRANDE — La Grande residents Sally Snyder and Sandy Roth started the La Grande Farmers Market in 1980. In its beginnings it was the Blue Mountain Producers operating in a vacant lot at the northwest corner of North Fir Street and Monroe Avenue. Over the next 40 years, the style, location and managers of the market have changed, but what remains the same is the commitment to providing fresh, locally sourced products and produce Saturday mornings from May to October.

Just The Facts

The La Grande Farmers Market continues to provide local goods as it enters its fifth decade. The market operates in Max Square in downtown La Grande on Saturday mornings and Tuesday afternoons from May to October.

The early years

It wasn’t until the summer of 2003 the La Grande Farmers Market found its home at Max

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Staff Photo by Sabrina Thompson

The La Grande Farmers Market on May 16 saw a large crowd social distancing and wearing masks as the season began. This marks the 40th year of the La Grande Farmers Market.

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section



Tonight
44 LOW
Clear



Friday
88/50
Sunny

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